

Disciple Series Week 7 Readings

Day 1

This week our daily devotions are taken from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Hears About a Need (Nehemiah 1:1-4)

In late autumn, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem. They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire." When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

Reflect: What was going on in Jerusalem that was so disturbing to Nehemiah?

Do: Write down 5 things that Nehemiah did when he heard about the situation in Jerusalem.

Pray: Ask God to help you be the one to identify needs in the world around you.

Day 2

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Asks God for Help (Nehemiah 1:5-11)

Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.' "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

Reflect: Why do you think that the first thing Nehemiah did was take the situation to God in prayer?

Do: Think about a need in your home, school or community and spend time praying that God will give you wisdom and grace and courage to be a leader in that situation.

Pray: Ask God to help you become a leader who makes a difference in the world around you.

Day 3

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Asks the King for Help (Nehemiah 2:1-9)

In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the

wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it." Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

Reflect: What were all the things that Nehemiah asked the king to give him?

Do: Think about the need you identified in your devotions last night and write a list of things that you need to be a leader in that situation.

Pray: Ask God to supply your needs through people that he raises up!

Day 4

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Takes a Closer Look (Nehemiah 2:11-16)

I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

Reflect: What qualities of leadership is Nehemiah displaying in this passage?

Do: Think of something specific you can learn from the example of Nehemiah in this passage.

Pray: Ask God to help you become the kind of leader who knowz what is happening around them.

Day 5

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Mobilises People (Nehemiah 2:17-18; 3)

Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its

beams and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.

Reflect: What was the secret to people being dedicated to working? Where did people do most of the work?

Do: How can you bring leadership to an area that is close to you, your home or your school?

Pray: Ask God to give you wisdom and courage as you bring change in your world.

Day 6

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Handles Difficulties (Nehemiah 4:6-15)

So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

Reflect: How did Nehemiah handle opposition to the work that came his way?

Do: Think of some things that make it hard for you to be a leader and think of a way to deal with challenges.

Pray: Ask God to help you keep going as a leader even when it is tough.

Day 7

Here is the next devotion from the life of Nehemiah. Read the passage, reflect, do the exercise and end your time of devotions in prayer.

Read: Nehemiah Celebrates Success (Nehemiah 7 and 8)

After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed. All the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who

could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

Reflect: How did Nehemiah have the people celebrate when the building was finished?

Do: Look back over this week and think of all that you have learnt about becoming a leader from the life of Nehemiah.

Pray: Ask God to help you be remembered for leading your peers like Nehemiah was remembered.